Hey Kickeroos-

Some folks have asked if I could post up a Skullkickers comic script so you can see how I write and what kind of detail/directions I give to Edwin while he's working on the issues.

Below is the script for Skullkickers issue #1. It was actually written way back in the summer of 2008 while I was away on a vacation. When Chris Stevens (the artist who originally did artwork for the 'Two Copper Pieces' short stories for Popgun where the Skullkickers debuted) wasn't available to draw the series it got shelved and then, once Edwin was on board as the artist in early 2010, I pulled it back out, made some minor adjustments and we were off and running.

There's no set scripting format for comics. Some people write loose plot outlines and let the artist fill in the pacing, adding dialogue afterwards. Other writers meticulously plan things all out frame by frame. I tend towards the latter and am always trying to think visually of how the scenes will come together, but the artist is free to tweak things if they feel they've got a better visual solution for a scene.

The first step in my process is to create a quick 'pacing page' with a rough list of events that need to happen in the issue and roughly what pages they will occur on. Here's my pacing list for issue #1:

1-5	Werewolf fight
6	Argue with Captain of the Guards
7	Argument continues
8	Argument ends as dignitary arrives
9	Pomp and snarky comments. Assassin preps
10	ATTACK Dignitary killed
11	SK jump into action before the town guards
12-16	Chase
17	Chase ends empty handed
18-20	Dignitaries rebuffed and SK offer to help
21	Sneaking into the morgue
22	Fight is about to start. 'To Be Continued'

Once the pencils are in, I send it off to the letterer and, depending on how it looks after that first lettering pass, I may adjust/edit dialogue to make sure it fits the panel and flows properly or add extra sound effects to enhance the action.

Anyways, that's how it works -

Enjoy!

JIM ZUB

SKULLKICKERS
ISSUE #1
Written by Jim Zub

Like a James Bond movie where the story opens with the ending of a previous mission, we kick off Skullkickers with some smashy action to give people a good taste of what's to come.

PAGE 1 (1 panel splash page)

The opening splash page is in-your-face combat. Readers should flip open this book and immediately get a sense that it's action-packed, sassy and violent.

A hulking pot-bellied werewolf snarls furiously in the face of our bastardly dwarf character. Saliva drips from its massive teeth and jaws. The two are locked in a grapple, with the dwarf holding the werewolf's wrists in a tight hold, its long razor-sharp nails incredibly close but unable to slash properly at the dwarf. The Werewolf's size, weight and strength push the dwarf back awkwardly into a losing position and he's gritting his teeth trying to keep the hold steady.

If we can see any of the background, then the backdrop for this wrestling match is an alleyway in a medieval village; Cobblestone lanes and mud, Eastern European-style architecture and mood. Make sure there's a closed wooden door on the ground level of this alleyway near the fight. We'll need that in a bit.

Make the angle dramatic. The odds should look grim for our midgety-bad ass.

DWARF

Yeesh!
Who ever heard of a <u>fat</u> werewolf?!

PAGE 2 (4 panels)

PANEL 1
Medium shot of the werewolf pushing the dwarf against the wall to exert even more leverage. The werewolf definitely has the advantage.

SFX

THUD

WEREWOLF

Keep making jokes, dwarf.
I'll silence you soon enough!

PANEL 2
Close up panel of the Werewolf's animalistic face, almost a POV shot of what the dwarf would be seeing, all gnashing nasty teeth and saliva with the creature's arms pushing towards him off panel.

WEREWOLF
Your ally is surely slain by my loyalists.
Your death is nigh.
Humor is all you have left!

PANEL 3
Same angle as panel 2, but now there's a dwarf boot smashing into the werewolf's eyes.

SFX
CRUNCH!

DWARF
(speaking off panel)
Humor an' a boot!

WEREWOLF
-Urt!

PANEL 4
The werewolf stumbles back slightly, its back towards the closed wooden door in the alley. The dwarf is now kneeling, trying to catch his breath for the instant the creature isn't on top of him.

WEREWOLF
RAAGH!
You think that'll-

PAGE 3 (4 panels)

PANEL 1
Okay, more rock 'n roll action.

The human is smashing through that door into the alleyway, with the breaking down door now careening into the back of the pot-bellied werewolf. Also being sent flying through the door around the human are several medium-sized knife-wielding human minions of the werewolf who are wearing furred tunics. They tried to kill our human tank but he's beaten the ever-living shit out of them and body checked the lot of them through the door out in to the werewolf.

SFX
(door blasting off its hinges)
KATHOOM

(door striking the werewolf)
THOCK

(minions falling down around the human)
clatter jangle splud

PANEL 2
The human has pulled out his gun from its holster in one smooth motion and shoots a minion off panel. We don't see the bullet's impact, just a squib of blood squirting in panel from where the shot fires.

If you've got room in the panel to show one of the minions who came crashing through the door still falling in the background, that'll help show how incredibly fast our human is in combat.

SFX
(gunfire)
KRAKOW!

HUMAN
You call <u>that</u> an ambush?

PANEL 3
The werewolf's massive clawed hands violently push away the door on top of it, even with one of his unconscious minions still draped over top.

WEREWOLF
(Growl) I will send you to-

PANEL 4
The human whirls around smiling and continues to fire his gun, now shooting the Werewolf three times – once in the jaw, once in the throat and one shot right smack in his gross outtie of a belly button. Make it really painful looking.

Bodies and door debris are on the ground. The dwarf should be up on his feet somewhere in the background, coming up behind the beast.

SFX
KRAKOW KRAKOW KRAKOW!

WEREWOLF
RAAaaaAGH!

PAGE 4 (5 panels)

PANEL 1
The dwarf surprises the pot-belly werewolf, grabbing one of its arms and actually wrenching the arm around its back in a momentary submission-type hold. The werewolf is still bleeding from its gunshot wounds and confused, using its other clawed hand to cover the intense belly wound.

DWARF
You thought yer fur-loined goons was gonna kill him? HAR!

SFX
WRENCH! pop

PANEL 2
While the dwarf tenses hard and holds the werewolf in the arm-bar, the human steps over a minion's body and unloads the remainder of his rounds into its knees.

SFX
KRAKOW KRAKOW!

WEREWOLF
RRRARAAAAAARARAGH!

PANEL 3
Close up on the smiling and sweating dwarf's face.

DWARF
This is a hoot an' all, but I hope you got silver to finish 'im off!

PANEL 4
Medium shot as the human reaches into his belt for something. The reader shouldn't be able to tell what it is yet.

HUMAN
What? You don't <u>trust</u> me?

PANEL 5
Medium close up of the werewolf looking towards the reader, POV pretty much of what the human sees right now. The creature is battered and bleeding, struggling to snarl and stay ferocious in the face of multiple gunshot wounds and various lacerations.

WEREWOLF
(The words should be chaotic looking.
He's mumbling/rambling)
You inhuman. So much. I kill you.

PAGE 5 (5 panels)

PANEL 1
Make this one nasty. The human is using all his might to jam a small silver-handled "something" right into the eye of the werewolf. It's pushed in so deep that all we see is the handle of it in the human's tightly gripped hand.

SFX
SPLORK!

PANEL 2
The dwarf drops the werewolf's writhing body to the ground, its smoking head silhouetted in a howl as it dies. The human holsters his gun while his foot leans on the head of one of the unconscious minions.

WEREWOLF
AROOOOOoooooooo!

SFX
Fwooosh!

PANEL 3
The dwarf watches the werewolf burn up off panel as the human stands beside him, smirking. Maybe have a clawed smoking werewolf hand twisted in pain in the foreground.

DWARF
What did you-

HUMAN
Check for yourself.

PANEL 4
The human walks out of frame looking pleased with himself while the dwarf leans over to collect the silver implement.

DWARF
HA!

PANEL 5
The dwarf laughs as he holds aloft a fine silver spoon, slightly tarnished with werewolf guts. Make sure it's clear that it's an ornate spoon so the gag plays out smooth.

DWARF
Silverware!

PAGE 6 (3 panels)

Okay, now that we've had our action-packed opening and let people know what they're in for, we can actually build up some story material and set the main plot in motion.

PANEL 1
Big establishing shot as the morning sun rises (so we know that time has passed). This isn't an opulent capital city, it's a crappy village with muddy peasants who have lost hope in the face of disease, poor government and supernatural baddies. Carts of shit-stained hay are hauled by donkeys, a mangy dog barks and people trudge about their day scowling.

Central to this shot should be the exterior of a well-worn tavern/inn called "The Gizzard". I trust you to decorate it (and the village) up in a way that works for you.

DWARF
(detached balloon of dialogue from inside the tavern)
Ungrateful FILTH!

PANEL 2
The dwarf stands in the Gizzard tavern, red in the face with rage as he points up at a burly looking man-at-arms in dingy chainmail who stands with his arms crossed in defiance. In the background, other patrons avoid the argument as the mustached bartender at the tavern wipes out the inside of an ale mug with his old rag, watching and smiling like he's heard this a dozen times before.

DWARF
We killed a lycanthrope an' broke up a cult!

LIEUTENANT
We found four unconscious people and a small pile of ash.
Can you prove that they tried to kill you?

PANEL 3
The dwarf's face twists in manic rage as he snarls and tries to keep himself from attacking the lieutenant. The lieutenant stays his ground, one eyebrow raised in an unimpressed manner.

DWARF
PROVE?!
I'll prove yur head's as empty as a pint glass!
I ain't gotta prove nothin'!! 'Tis TRUE!

PAGE 7 (5 panels)

PANEL 1
The Lieutenant states his case coldly while the dwarf scowls, holding his pint glass like makeshift weapon. In the background, the human has just walked in to the bar and taken note of the heated exchange.

LIEUTENANT
Listen well. You and your companion are not the law.
Your interference is not required.

DWARF
BAH! Yur just pissin' cause we've killed more monsters
this week than yu've seen since yu were sucklin' yer Mum!

PANEL 2
The dwarf scrunches up his face in red rage and swings the pint glass at the Lieutenant while the human briskly inserts himself between the two of them.

LIEUTENANT
You will take your mercenary ways elsewhere.

DWARF
Enough chatter! Take -

SFX
(glass swings)
Swing!

PANEL 3
The glass is stopped by the human's large hands just before it reaches the Lieutenant's shocked face.

DWARF
THA-

SFX
(glass stopped)
thop

HUMAN
Ooookay. Let's not go there just yet.

LIEUTENANT
-irk

PANEL 4
The human feigns congeniality while he gives the dwarf a slight shove to push him back from the Lieutenant's immediate reach. The Lieutenant is still a bit in shock.

DWARF
HEY!

HUMAN
All of us are trying to keep folks safe, right?
We're hired to take care of monsters and that's what we do.

LIEUTENANT
Agreed, but –

PANEL 5
Exact same panel angle and size as panel 4. The human raises his hand to hush the confused Lieutenant while he grabs the Dwarf swiftly in to a headlock with his other free arm. The dwarf's stubby arms flail and twitch in pain.

HUMAN
No buts.
Let's discuss this when we're a bit more calm.

SFX
Squee---eeze-!

DWARF
-ack!

LIEUTENANT
Hmmf…
I just want some law and order.

PAGE 8 (5 panels)

PANEL 1
The human continues his nice façade while the dwarf gropes futilely towards the Lieutenant, trying to grab him. The Lieutenant turns his head in surprise at an arriving messenger who's on the edge of the panel.

HUMAN
Sure, who doesn't?

DWARF
(muttering under his breath while flailing)
must – ki---ll –

MESSENGER
(from off panel)
Lieutenant! The Chancellor is at the front gate!

PANEL 2
Close up panel of the Lieutenant grimaces as he realizes that his schedule is brutally screwed up.

LIEUTENANT
Now?! Why are they here so early?!

PANEL 3
The Lieutenant dashes out the door of the Gizzard (or just off panel, whatever works best for you) while the human loosens his hold on the Dwarf's neck.

HUMAN
Heh.

SFX
release

DWARF
BAH!

LIEUTENANT
I'll deal with you two later!

PANEL 4
The dwarf rages to the human, cursing his sudden kindness. The human is unconcerned.

DWARF
Why in blazes didn't yu lemme smash his face open?!
It was right <u>there</u>!

HUMAN
Calm down. I'm not interested in breaking you out of jail
for assaulting him in front of a half dozen witnesses.

PANEL 5
The human deposits the pint glass onto the bar to the smirking bartender while he heads outside, leaving the dwarf seething internally.

HUMAN
Grab your axes.
Let's see what's got him all in a huff.

DWARF
Fine. But next time he jaws off,
I get ta whomp him one.

PAGE 9 (4 panels)

PANEL 1
Large establishing shot of the front gate to the village wide open as a large entourage of a foreign dignitary arrives and the villagers react with amazement as the local guardsmen salute. Exotic-bridled horses or camels (whatever you want, just make it distinctive)

prance in, opulent and colourful. It's obvious this guy has some serious coin and knows how to make an entrance.

The Chancellor is in his late twenties, with a dignified and well kept look. He smiles slightly and waves politely to the crowd (think of that polite cupped hand rotation that Queen Elizabeth always uses when greeting the masses – what a prick).

To one side of the Chancellor should be an advisor named Fjalo. Again, make Fjalo's outfit distinctive as he'll be interacting with the Skull Kickers later on and we should establish him clearly here. Obviously Fjalo isn't decked out as finely as the Chancellor, but he's no slouch either.

PANEL 2
The Chancellor leans over to whisper something sarcastic to Fjalo. The advisor keeps looking out at the crowd and smiling even as venomous words pour forth quietly.

CHANCELLOR
(quietly)
Easily impressed aren't they, Fjalo?

FJALO
(quietly)
As always, my Lord.
Simple fools and their dirty streets.

PANEL 3
High angle shot from a guard tower looking down at the Chancellor's procession and the open front gate. We get a real sense of how impressive the "parade" is from this vantage point. A guard stands at attention almost fully in silhouette with his back towards the reader.

PANEL 4
Exact same size and angle as panel 3, only now a lithe cloaked figure that has a bow and quiver of arrows strapped to their back (female, but we can't tell that from here) has moved behind the guard and slit his throat – all in silhouette.

You should be able to stat most of the parade details over from panel 3, just changing the position of a few elements to make it "move" forward a bit.

SFX
(throat slice)
sli---ice!

GUARD
Agh-uuuuhhh!

PAGE 10 (5 panels)

PANEL 1
Now back to street level where the Skullkickers are wading into the crowd, annoyed at having to push their way past stupid peasants just to see anything useful. The human is peeking above the medium-sized people around him while the dwarf has just finished stomping on someone's foot below panel.

DWARF
Why'd we leave the bar? This is thicker than a swamp!

SFX
stomp

HUMAN
Yeah, but whoever just showed up is rich as royals. Leagues past any haul we've seen in this stinking hole before.

PANEL 2
Medium shot as the dwarf elbows a different peasant in the groin. His victim winces in absolute agony.

DWARF
Oh yeah?
Where's this prat from, the capital?

SFX
whonk

PEASANT
(pained wobbly text)
Ooooh…

PANEL 3
Close up as the human shields his eyes from the glaring sunlight to get a better look in the distance.

HUMAN
Dunno. Trying to get a better look, but this sun's a-

PANEL 4
Tough shot here.

Draw an approximation of what the human sees from his vantage point. We should see heads of the crowd in the foreground (below his tall view), the dignitary and his men on their transportation behind them. If you can possibly fit in the Lieutenant stepping up towards the Chancellor's entourage to greet them, great. If not, that's fine.

Behind all that crap is the guard tower. Even with the glaring sun, the reader can see a small silhouette of an archer in the tower drawing their bow to strike the Chancellor. Draw another close up panel of the archer if it helps clarify what the human sees. The sun's glare makes it hard to make out detail, but that drawn bow and form is recognizable.

PANEL 5
Large close up shot to emphasize the shock. His hand still shielding the glare, the human's eyes widen in surprise as he realizes what he's seeing.

HUMAN
- killer.

PAGE 11 (3 panels)

PANEL 1
The Lieutenant nervously greets the dignitary while his slightly unkempt-looking guards stand behind him saluting. The Lieutenant is clearly not ready for this but is trying to keep his composure.

LIEUTENANT
Chancellor, greetings!
We were told you'd be arriving later in the day!
The mayor has been notified and is en route.

PANEL 2
Close up as the Chancellor forces a slight smile, looking slightly downwards towards the Lieutenant off panel.

CHANCELLOR
Many thanks, Lieutenant.
Our travel was blessed with good fortune it seems. All is-

PANEL 3
OUCH! The chancellor is struck with a deadly arrow from off panel. Face, neck, heart – you choose where the shaft hits, just make it a real whammy. Show the very beginnings of reaction from the advisor and other nearby members of his entourage but minimize/blank out the background to create a stark BAM panel of singular violence.

SFX
(arrow strike)
THOCK!

CHANCELLOR
(almost a whisper – little text in a larger word balloon)
well…

PAGE 12 (4 panels)

PANEL 1
OUCH part two. The Chancellor's body crashes down on to the street awkwardly in front of horrified onlookers. Although shouldn't be crazy gory-looking, there should be no doubt that he's very dead.

SFX
SPLUD!

PANEL 2
The Lieutenant, his guards, Fjalo and many of the Chancellor's entourage now look skyward based on the angle the arrow came from while a mad panic overtakes the crowd. It's full blown chaos.

FJALO
Nooooo~!

LIEUTENANT
<u>Assassin</u>! In the tower!

RANDOM PEASANT 1
We're under attack!

RANDOM PEASANT 2

Run for it!

RANDOM PEASANT 3

Aieeee!

PANEL 3

Close up of Fjalo enraged, with teeth clenched and tears welling up in the corners of his eyes.

FJALO

Get him!
A thousand opas to the man who grabs that killer!

PANEL 4

As the crowd freaks out and runs away, the Skullkickers stand stationary looking at each other, unsure for a moment if they heard Fjalo clearly.

DWARF

Did he just say –

HUMAN

- a thousand?

PAGE 13 – 4 panels

PANEL 1

The Skullkickers smile as they burst into action, running and full-on body checking any peasants stupid enough to get in their way during the panic.

DWARF

Don’ worry, yer dignits.
We’ll catch the blooder!

PANEL 2

Wide shot as the Skullkickers make a beeline towards the guard tower with the human actually carrying the dwarf above his head, smiling as he gets ready to throw the pint-sized bad ass. At the same time, the Lieutenant points and yells at them in anger and one of the guards looks skyward in confusion.

LIEUTENANT

No! STOP! You’re forbidden to chase him!

RANDOM GUARD 1

Was that an arrow?

RANDOM GUARD 2

Yeah, I think so.

PANEL 3

Ignoring the Lieutenant completely, the human launches the dwarf towards the second storey of the guard tower.

HUMAN

Don't let him out of your sight!

SFX

TOSS!

DWARF

Aye.

PANEL 4

The dwarf grabs hold of the raised portions of the stone on the side of the guard tower and scrambles up towards the viewer with a devious grin on his face.

DWARF

Tain't no pansy bowman gonna escape from me.

PAGE 14 (5 panels)

PANEL 1

Medium shot as the dwarf peeks his head up over the edge of the balcony wall, still grinning wildly. He's enjoying the chase.

DWARF

Greetin's!

PANEL 2

Exact same shot as panel one, only now with the dwarf awkwardly tilting his head as an arrow goes whizzing right past him, close enough to clip the tip of his moustache.

SFX
fwoosh

DWARF
<u>ACH</u>!
It seems yer a touch defensive, bowman.
Nervous even!

PANEL 3
The dwarf vaults over the balcony edge and effortlessly throws one of his hand axes at the dark cloaked archer in the foreground.

SFX
(axe throw)
CHUCK!

DWARF
Killin’ can make some folks jittery, it’s true.

PANEL 4
The axe lands with serious force, catching the archer’s cloak against one of the wooden beams in the guard tower. As hard as it is, try to keep the figure’s gender and details still hidden while still showing the action clearly.

SFX
(axe sinks in to the wood beam)
KA-TUNK!

DWARF
But after enough of ‘em,
tha death don’t shake yu up...

PANEL 5
The dwarf has pulled out another hand axe and is now heading towards the viewer (ie. the archer) with a glint of menace on his face.

DWARF
…it’s a rush!

PAGE 15 (5 panels)

PANEL 1
The mystery archer draws a knife and slices the trapped portion of her cloak loose in one fluid motion.

SFX
Slash!

PANEL 2
The archer swings the blade up to defensively block the dwarf’s axe swing, catching the axe head just narrowly on the crosspiece of her knife.

DWARF
Aha!

SFX
(weapons clash)
CLANG!

PANEL 3
Medium shot as the dwarf pushes hard to break through the block, leveraging his superior strength and lower center of gravity.

DWARF
Good block, lad! Unexpected and-

PANEL 4
Same view as panel 3, only now the archer has caught the dwarf off guard with a solid kick between his legs, hard enough that it lifts him right off the ground. It’s fitting karma for his earlier peasant assault on page 10. Groin shots = comedy.

SFX
WHUD!

DWARF
-dooooooooohhhh~

PANEL 5
The archer dashes towards an opening in the opposite direction of the parade, out towards other rooftops of the village, while the dwarf crumbles to his knees in cursing pain.

DWARF

Yu… foul… dam'it…

PAGE 16 (3 panels)

PANEL 1
Big rockin' action panel.

We're dynamically looking up from the alleyway between the guard tower and another building beside it. The archer makes a dramatic leap from the high perch across to the roofs beyond while the human, who has just run into the alleyway, looks up and draws a bead on her with his pistol.

I don't need full on anime speed lines, but some kind of action lines on the edges of the panel to convey the rapidity of this instant would be pretty cool. This should be one of those panels that grabs a reader's attention when they're flipping through the comic because it's so bad-ass.

PANEL 2
A fraction of a second later, all we can see is the cut edge of the archer's cloak as it crosses over to the roof, the human's two shots blasting the edge of it tattered, but missing their true target.

SFX
(gunfire)
KRAKOW! KRAKOW!

SFX
(cloak tattering)
spaf!

PANEL 3
Close up of the human scowling at his bad shooting.

HUMAN
(dark cloudy balloon of anger)
~grumble swear curse~

PAGE 17 (4 panels)

PANEL 1
Heading back out to the street to get a better look at the rooftops, the human is blocked by the Lieutenant and a half dozen of his guards. The human is looking up and off panel while casually reloading his gun, mostly ignoring the yelling Lieutenant.

LIEUTENANT
Where?! Where did the assassin go?
Why aren’t you chasing him?!

HUMAN
Just hush for a sec, will ya? You’re in my way.
Can’t get a bead on him.

PANEL 2
The Lieutenant barks orders to several of the guards while the human keeps scanning up and off panel hoping to spot the killer on the move.

LIEUTENANT
Shut the gates and block every access point!
I want this killer found now.

HUMAN
I think you already lost him, pal.
He bolted quicker than a spooked bird. Gone.

PANEL 3
As the guards scramble off to carry out the Lieutenant’s orders, he refocuses his rage back onto the human, who is now looking on the ground level outside the panel and smirking and casually pointing off panel with his pistol.

LIEUTENANT
Give me one reason why I don’t arrest yo- hey, why are you smiling? What’s so damn funny?

HUMAN
Just wondering how you’re gonna explain this mess to the mayor. He looks kinda… displeased.

PANEL 4
The Lieutenant's shoulders slump and his head slouches as he heads off panel for what the reader should be sure is a severe verbal ass-kicking. The human stands looking amused and defiant.

LIEUTENANT
I hate you.

HUMAN
I know.

PAGE 18 (4 panels)

PANEL 1
We've had a lot of dense conversation panels and medium or close up panels, so let's pull the camera back and get a nice shot of the town again. Fjalo and two of the visiting servants are being shooed out of the local morgue by two guards, with the door being slammed shut behind them.

In the foreground have a pile of hay or other debris. You can have a couple stubby dwarf boots sticking out there if you want. That's where our little jerk is going to pop up from.

NARRATION
The next morning ~

FJALO
NO! This is an outrage!
You can't do this to me!

GUARD 1
Sorry sir, just following orders.

GUARD 2
Sorry.

PANEL 2
Medium shot as the dwarf rises up out of the hay pile with a hand axe in one hand and a mostly empty mug in the other. Bits of straw stick out of his hair/mouth/armor and he's near crossed-eyed with hangover and disorientation.

FJALO
(off panel yelling)
I demand that you give us the Chancellor's body!
You must not interfere with our burial rites!

DWARF
(wobbly, pained text)
Wha~? What's all th'racket?
Ain't a body able ta sleep on tha street no more?

PANEL 3
One of the servants is now holding Fjalo's fist back as he leans in against one of the guards blocking the door. The guard looks nervous but isn't moving.

SERVANT 1
Fjalo, please. Don't.

FJALO
I'll see you lashed for this!
Pulled skyward by your ankles and lashed!

GUARD
J- Just following orders, sir.
It's an investigation 'cause the wound looks poisoned.

PANEL 4
The two servants carefully pull Fjalo away (and inadvertently towards the hay pile) as he yells and points back at the guards.

FJALO
Poison?! Who cares about poison? He was slain by an arrow in the face, you imbecile! How does that require investigation?!

PAGE 19 (5 panels)

PANEL 1
Fjalo has regained a bit of his composure. He's stopped actively struggling against the servants and is now walking away with them. One of the servants is patting him on the back with reassurance while the other is helping lead him away from the morgue. Just coming in from off panel is the dwarf, who is brushing hay off of his armor.

FJALO
We need to get that body back.
I don't care how.

DWARF
Oy! I see ya're in need o' some help there.

PANEL 2
Fjalo stares at the dwarf, looking unimpressed while the servants try to keep Fjalo calm. The dwarf puffs himself up with pride, even though he still has straw sticking out of his hair.

FJALO
Who is this?

SERVANT 2
A dwarf, sir. One of the gents who tried
to catch the assassin yesterday.

SERVANT 1
(whispering to Fjalo)
He smells of ale, sir.

DWARF
A mercenary of the highest quality, yer richness.
A guard, a thief or a killer if that's what ye need.

PANEL 3
Fjalo sizes up the dwarf some more, scratching his head slightly. The dwarf holds up his axe proudly to the trio, ignoring (or oblivious) of their hesitant looks.

FJALO
(muttering back to the servant under his breath)
They all smell like ale here.

(regular speech)
Indeed. How would we know that you are all
these things, and good at them as well?

SERVANT 2
He flew through the air towards the tower like a bloated
bat!

DWARF
See these rings on me axe handle? I killed that many
monsters this week. You gimme 600 of yer opas and I'll get
that body back to ye.

PANEL 4
Tighter panel as Fjalo and one of the servants lean in close to each other for a quick whispered exchange.

SERVANT 1
(whispering)
He's eager, but what if he gets caught?

FJALO
(whispering out of the side of his mouth)
We deny it all and send a messenger home for reinforcements.

DWARF
(off panel, but still yammering)
What's ta lose, yer formalness?

PANEL 5
Fjalo leans forward and squints his eyes a bit as he barters with the happy dwarf in rapid succession. The dwarf looks pleased and confident.

FJALO
Nothing up front.
350 opas upon completion.

DWARF
550.

FJALO
437 opas and a half-ginnete.

DWARF
Deal.

PAGE 20 (3 panels)

PANEL 1
Nice large panel showing the Skullkickers sneaking towards the morgue at night. Pull the camera back a bit more than usual to establish the time change clearly and set the scene. The duo's weapons are sheathed at the moment – they're not anticipating much in the way of combat from a simple morgue heist. The human has an empty burlap bag in one hand that they're going to use for the body.

There is a single guard on watch out front, looking bored. He hasn't noticed our two mercenaries making their way towards him, pressed against the wall.

The street lanterns don't give off much in the way of light, so most of this sequence will be illuminated via moonlight until the last page.

NARRATION
That Night ~

GUARD
sniff snort

PANEL 2
Close up of the guard just starting to edge his finger up one of his nostrils to start picking his nose.

GUARD
sniff! Somethin'… up… there…

PANEL 3
Exact same close up shot as panel 2, only now the human's arm has crossed into the panel, striking the guard in the side of the face with a solid knockout punch.

SFX
WHUD!

GUARD
~ulp!

PAGE 21 (4 panels)

PANEL 1
Medium shot as the human sets the knocked out guard down and starts checking his belt pouch for keys. The dwarf stares at the locked morgue door indignantly.

DWARF
Any keys on 'im?

HUMAN
Checking…

PANEL 2
The dwarf doesn't wait for a response and pummels his whole body in to the door, breaking it open in one brutal shot. The human looks unimpressed.

SFX
KA-RAACK!

HUMAN
…still checking…

PANEL 3
Same panel configuration as panel 2, only now the dwarf is already in the door (and out of sight) while the human starts to move towards the door.

HUMAN
Nope. No key.

DWARF
(word balloon tail heading in the door)
I figured.

PANEL 4
Close up of the dwarf's surprised face to end the page and keep people guessing what will come next.

DWARF
Thump the guard, snap the door, grab the body.
Easy coin. Now we'll jus---- AAH!

PAGE 22 (1 panel, splash page)

Full page splash. The mortuary inside is a simple series of shelves and stone slabs set up for checking and preparing bodies. The Skullkickers have their backs to the viewer. Both of them are caught off guard and haven't had a chance to draw their weapons at this point.

Before them are a half dozen rough-looking peasants dressed in dirty scraps who are in the midst of piling bodies (in various recent states of death) onto a large section of thick-corded cargo netting (like you'd see on a ship) laid out on the floor. One of them is holding lantern, casting creepy illumination and long shadows throughout the large room.

In front of the laid out netting is a massive 8-9 foot tall hunchbacked zombie that looks like it's been pieced together from a multitude of different body parts. Its limbs are

massive and its head is a lumpy semi-composed mass of fleshy bits and pieces amongst normal facial features.

Both the body thieves and the zombie are looking up at the Skullkickers. We’ve caught that tenuous moment of surprise before all Hell breaks loose.

HUMAN
whoops.

NARRATION
To Be Continued!

-END SCRIPT #1-